

Norway and Argentina were the only two countries to make Colt Government Models under license for their militaries. One was a 1911 copy and the other a 1911A1.

Browning's Other 1911s

The United States was not the only country to produce military versions of the Government Model.

By Philip Schreier

As a kid, I always wanted to have a Colt pistol. A real, honest-to-goodness Hartford-made Colt pistol. To me, the model didn't matter as much as that it had to be a Colt—something that just spoke of quality and was a tangible link to America's military history.

So imagine my disappointment when I opened a box containing what I thought was my first Colt 1911 only to find that it didn't read "Colt" on the slide but "11.25mm AUT. Pistol M/1914." I had absolutely no clue what it was I was holding. I thought I had been cheated and yearned to possess a real Colt instead of this knock-off pretender.

I was in quite a state of shock once I found out that the pistol I now owned was Norwegian and worth three or four real Colts.

The Norwegian holds a special niche in the

annals of collecting Colts. Along with the Argentine Model of 1927, they are the only two copies of the 1911 pistol made under license from Colt and Browning in foreign countries for use by their military. Today they represent a growing interest in the collector's market, where Norwegian examples can fetch as much as \$4,500, and Argentine models bring close to \$750.

The Norwegian Model of 1914

The story of the Norwegian Model of 1914 begins in 1904 when the Norwegian government of King Haakon VII established a Permanent Gun Commission to test and adopt a new service pistol. Its tests of various designs and models ran concurrently with the pistol trials that the United States embarked upon in 1906. One step ahead of our own

military, the Norwegians adopted the Browning-designed Colt .45 ACP pistol in 1910. In what is reminiscent of the controversy that surrounded the American adoption of the M-9 pistol in 1987, there was a huge outcry in Norway that they should have adopted a homegrown pistol for use by their own military.

Another board was convened, and again in 1911 the Colt won hands down. Still not satisfied, members of the Norwegian parliament refused to authorize money for the purchase of pistols until another round of tests had been completed. By 1914 the board again recommended the Colt "with no reservation." In 1915 the Norwegian chief of ordnance was finally able to execute a deal that resulted in the adoption of the 1911, named the Model of 1912 by the Norwegians.

During these trials and negotiations it was determined that under the agreement between John M. Browning, the designer and Colt, their licensed North American manufacturer, any overseas manufacture of a Browning design in Europe could only be with the approval of Browning's European representative, Fabrique Nationale. An FN-produced copy of the 1911 had been submitted for trials in 1912 and was so marked "1912" on the slide. Some 300 commercial 1911s were shipped from Colt for tests in 1913.

World War I interrupted FN's participation in the negotiations, as the German army occupied their plant from 1914 to 1918. An agreement signed on January 30, 1915, enabled the Norwegians to begin production of the Colt at their own factory in Kongsberg in exchange for a complete set of manufacturing drawings and 25,000 Norwegian kroner. The agreement did not stipulate how many or for how long the Norwegians could produce the pistol. Some limited production began at Kongsberg Vapenfabrik in 1917 and resulted in the manufacture of a limited number of pistols (some authors believe between 95 and 500 of these pistols were produced). The slides of these pistols are marked "Colt AUT. Pistol M/1912."

In 1918 some slight changes were made to the design. With the exception of some checkering patterns and the slide markings, the M/1912 is identical to the Colt 1911. The new model introduced in 1918 was marked "11.25 mm AUT. Pistol M/1914" on the slide. This new model was made with a distinctive slide release that was extended and lowered, some-



The Norwegian M/1914 was a very close copy of the U.S. Model 1911, with the exception of a slight difference in the slide release. Caliber was 11.25mm (.45 ACP).

what different from the standard Colt slide release. Another visible variant is that every part, with the exception of the slide spring, is serial numbered.

Production of the Model 1914 continued from 1918 to 1987 and ended with 32,874 manufactured. One unique aspect of the M/1914 is that the actual date of manufacture is stamped on the right side of the frame.

Production was sporadic throughout the manufacturing period. In addition to the year-of-manufacture stamp on the right side of the slide, there is also a cryptic proofmark seen under the date that varied during production. On the left side of the slide, there are generally one or two crown proofmarks. The far-left proof is the monogram of King Haakon VII, and the one on the right is the proofmark of Kongsberg Vapenfabrik.

Norway remained neutral during World War I but found itself embroiled in World War II—somewhat against its will. It was obvious from the start of the war that Norway's rich iron ore deposits and ports would be great assets to the Allies and Axis both. With a standing army of only 12,000, the Norwegians would need help to remain free. Britain had considered a preemptive occupation of the country but was beaten to the punch by Nazi Germany on April 9, 1940. Fierce fighting broke out as Norway refused to go down without a fight as so many of her European neighbors had done previously. Aided by close to 10,000 Allied troops who landed on April 14, an attempt to stop the Nazi juggernaut met with failure when the remaining Allies and the King of Norway were evacuated by June 9th.

On April 13, German troops captured and occupied Kongsberg Vapenfabrik and remained there

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Unlike with the U.S. 1911, all major parts on the Norwegian M/1914, such as this safety and trigger, were serial numbered.

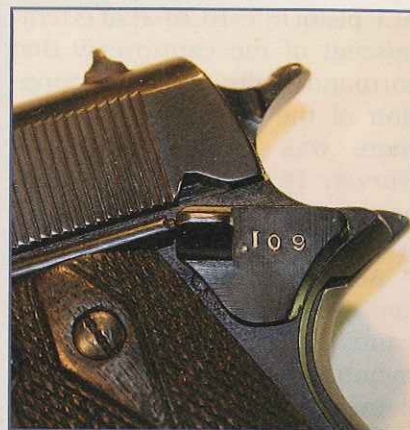


Norwegian 1914s were marked with the date of manufacture. Under Nazi occupation the king's proof was dropped from slide markings.

until early May 1945. Under its occupation, pistol production continued as the Germans adopted the pistol as Pistole 657(n). It is interesting to note that there was a possibility that German soldiers armed with the M/1914 may have engaged in combat with American soldiers armed with almost identical .45 ACP Colt 1911s.

Initially during occupation, pistols produced at Kongsberg Vapenfabrikk bore the same pre-

war marks and proofs. It was general practice for the Germans to stamp pistols produced under occupation with Waffenampt marks denoting acceptance into the German military. This did not happen on the pistols produced from 1940 through 1944. In 1945 the 920 guns produced before the end of the war were marked with the Eagle/WaA84 stamp. These Nazi-marked guns bring the highest premium of all the Model 1914 guns.



Norwegian markings varied depending upon when the gun was manufactured. Those shown are typically the most common.

Some serial-number charts and records show that M/1914 pistols were manufactured or put together from existing parts after the liberation of Norway through 1947. This number could be as high as 3,240 guns if records are assumed to be correct.

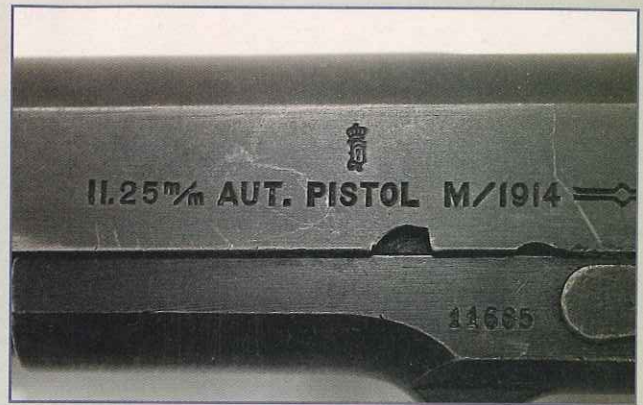
In the late 1980s the Norwegian government again looked into adopting a new service pistol for its troops. It was theorized that if it chose a new pistol, it would need to evaluate the possibilities and performance of its own manufacturing abilities. The machinery that had lain dormant at Kongsberg Vapenfabrik since 1947 was fired up again, and 20 M/1914 pistols were made, picking up the serial numbers where production had halted 40 years earlier. All 20 pistols were imported into the United States by Benet Arms Company of Afton, Virginia, in 1988.

In summary, the various models are:

- 1.) Norwegian Trial Model, made between 1913 and 1914, 300 manufactured by Colt. Serial numbers with "C" prefix.
- 2.) Norwegian Model of 1912, made in Kongsberg, 95 to 500 manufactured. All bear 1917 date.
- 3.) Norwegian Model of 1914, made in Kongsberg.



An early Norwegian M/1914 dated 1918. Some 600 pistols were made in that first year of normal manufacture.



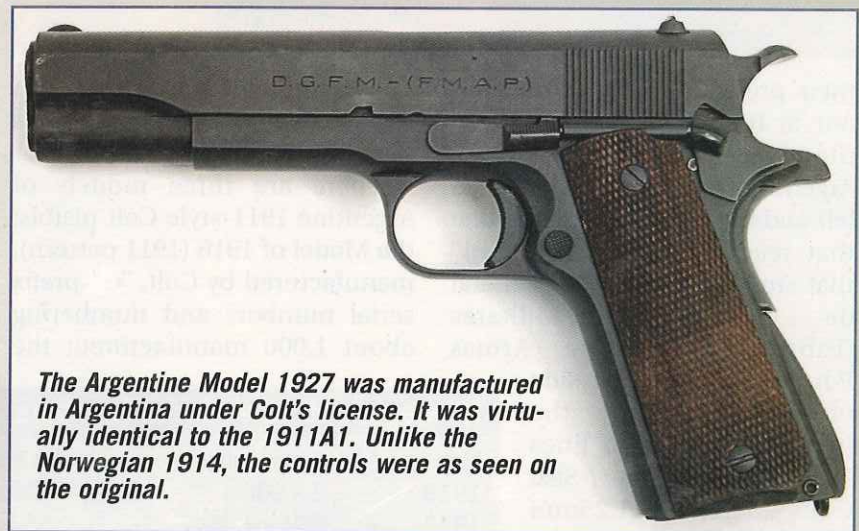
Most guns manufactured by the Norwegians (not under Nazi occupation) were stamped with King Haakon VII's royal cipher, stamped above "PISTOL."

Manufactured between 1918 and 1987, 32,874 manufactured.

The Argentine Model of 1927

The field trials that the United States performs on proposed service weapons and equipment is second to none in the world. Most countries, with the exception of the Norwegians, as described previously above, wait until the United States has adopted a new service item and then contract with the manufacturer to obtain the same item for their inventory, saving millions in research and development as well as years of time. When the U.S. adopted the 1911, Argentina, Brazil, Britain, Canada, France, Mexico, Norway and Russia all ordered 1911s for their own troops. Argentina began ordering 1911s in 1914, and in 1916 1,000 1911s bearing the Argentine seal on the top of the slide were sold to the Argentine government by Colt.

The Colt 1911 underwent numerous design changes in 1926 and reemerged as the 1911A1. The Argentine army was the first military power to acquire the gun for its national service, ordering 10,000 from Colt and naming them Modelo 1927. Colt continued to produce and ship the initial order of pistols to



The Argentine Model 1927 was manufactured in Argentina under Colt's license. It was virtually identical to the 1911A1. Unlike the Norwegian 1914, the controls were as seen on the original.



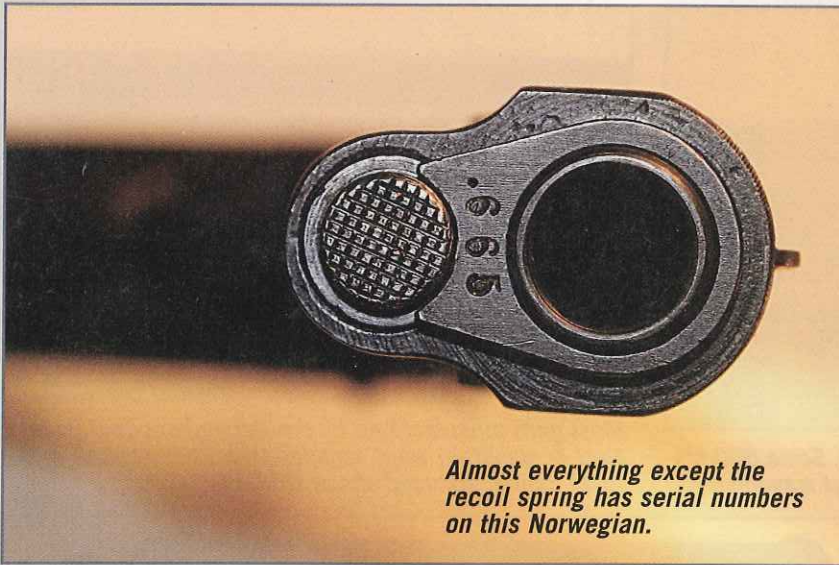
Argentine 1927s were stamped with the country's coat of arms at the rear of the slide, in front of the serrations. Markings were pure Argentine.

Argentina until 1937, when large orders of the 1911A1 began to roll in from the U.S. government.

Under agreement with Colt, the Argentineans established

Fabrica Militar de Armas Portatiles in Rosario, Argentina, and began manufacturing 1911A1 pistols. These guns picked up their serial numbers where

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Almost everything except the recoil spring has serial numbers on this Norwegian.

their previous Colt contract ran out, at 10,000. Nearly identical to the U.S.-made 1911A1s, the Argentine-produced guns had a left-slide inscription on one line that read "D.G.F.M. - (F.M.A.P.)" that stood for *Dirección General de Fabricaciones Militares (Fabrica Militar de Armas Portátiles)*. The right side of the slide bore the inscription on two lines "Ejercito Argentino // Sist. Colt Cal 11.25mm Mod.1927."

Later-production slides kept the same left-side markings, but the right side read in three lines "Republica Argentina // Marina De Guerra // Sist. Colt Cal 11.25 mm Mod 1927" and had the Argentinean crest to the left of the inscriptions. The gun nearly rivaled the Norwegian as far as serial numbers were concerned. On one model in the 97,000 range, serial numbers were located on the right side of the frame above the triggerguard, on the right side of the slide, on top of the slide behind the ejection port and on the exposed portion of the barrel.

It is thought that more than 100,000 of these D.G.F.M. 1911A1s were manufactured.

There are three models of Argentine 1911-style Colt pistols: the Model of 1916 (1911 pattern), manufactured by Colt, "C"-prefix serial numbers and numbering about 1,000 manufactured; the

Model of 1927 (1911A1 pattern), manufactured by Colt, 10,000 manufactured between 1927 and 1937; and the Model of 1927, manufactured by D.G.F.M. in Rosario, Argentina, after 1937.

Don't be confused by a Colt lookalike called the Ballester-Molina or HAFDASA pistols made in Argentina that was an unauthorized copy of the original. Many differences are initially apparent, such as vertical grooves in the grips as opposed to the typical diamond checkering and the interruption in the vertical grip groove pattern on the slide. Although known to be severely inferior to the Colt or official Argentine examples, nearly 8,000 of the Ballester-Molina pistols were purchased by the British government during World War II and used to support clandestine operations in Europe. The British-purchased examples are identified by a "B" prefix to the serial number.

Norwegian M/1914 Serial Numbers

Year	Serial Range	Number Produced
1918	1 - 600	600
1919	601 - 1,150	550
1920	1,151 - 1,650	500
1921	1,651 - 2,200	550
1922	2,201 - 2,950	750
1923	2,951 - 4,610	2,400
1924	4,611 - 6,700	2,090
1925	6,701 - 8,940	2,240
1926	8,941 - 11,820	2,880
1927	11,821 - 15,900	4,080
1928	15,901 - 20,100	4,200
1929	20,101 - 21,440	1,340
1932	21,441 - 21,940	500
1933	21,941 - 22,040	100
1934	22,041 - 22,141	100
1936	22,142 - 22,211	70
1939	22,212 - 22,311	100
1940	22,312 - 22,361	50
1941	22,362 - 26,460	4,099
1942	26,461 - 29,614	3,151
1945	29,615 - 30,535	920
1947	30,536 - 32,854	3,240
1987	32,855 - 32,874	20

(Courtesy 27th Edition Blue Book of Gun Values)

Conclusion

The only two legitimate licensed copies of the famous Browning-designed Colt 1911 produced overseas are the Norwegian Models of 1912 and 1914 and the Argentine Model of 1927. Certainly, the Norwegian Models offer the collectors an interesting link to military history with their involvement in World War II and the connection to the German war effort. Although Argentina was not involved in any armed conflict from 1870 to 1982, with the exception of innumerable political coups, it would be interesting to research the possible use of the Model 1927 in the Falkland Islands war of 1982. ©